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NSC BRIEFING

9 May 1957

NEAR EAST NEWS

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II. In Syria, Communist-supported Gov't candidates won three out of the four parliamentary seats in the 4-5 May by-elections.

A. Gov't victory was brought about by manipulation of electoral machinery, plus Soviet financial support. Among tactics employed by the government were:

1. Turning away of rightist voters from polling places on grounds not "registered".
2. Deletion of rightists' names from election lists.
3. Use of police and army to campaign, distribute leftist propaganda, intimidate and even kidnap rightist voters.

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4. Use of Gov't and Army vehicles to bring leftist voters to polls.
 5. Buying of votes and multiple-voting with false identity cards.
- B. Election results illustrate both extent of leftist control of Syria and future pattern of leftist action--intimidation, pressure, manipulation.
1. Opposition forces disheartened, but returns may stimulate conservative officer group in Army to halt further loss of their influence.
 2. "Second-round" transfers of leftist-oriented officers to less influential posts has reportedly begun.
 3. Transfer of conservative General Daghestani (former Israeli front commander) to command of key Damascus & Qatana garrisons may be indicative of future conservative strategy.
- C. Meanwhile, leftists reportedly pressing for restoration of martial law in four voting districts - primarily to muzzle unfriendly Damascus press.
- D. Khalid Bakhdash, Syrian Communist leader, in a meeting with leftists (including Col. Sarraj, head of army intelligence), insisted that oil pipelines must be out of the events in Syria follow the course of those in Jordan.
1. Held such action would be effective retaliation against US, Saudis.
 2. Bakhdash and Sarraj threat cannot be discounted.

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III. In Israel, Gov't plans to send ships to test transit rights in Suez Canal and Aqaba.


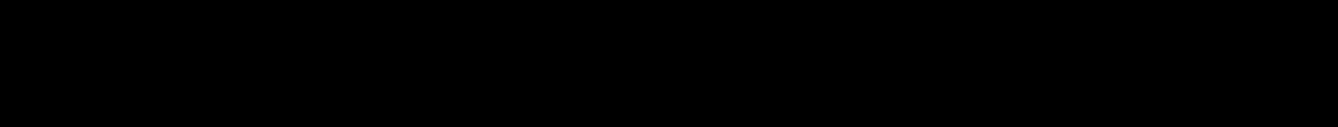
25X1C
A.



B. Non-Israeli vessels continue to pass the Straits en route to Eilat despite Arab protests and Saudi threats to shoot.

- 1. On 4 May, the Kern Hills made its second call at Eilat with a cargo of Iranian oil.**
- 2. A small Italian freighter has also made the trip without trouble.**

C. A test of Aqaba waters by an Israeli flag-vessel appears to be drawing closer.

- 1. One Israeli vessel--the Atlit--is on its way around the Cape of Good Hope heading for Eilat.**
 - 2.  the Atlit is expected to start the final part of its trip from Djibouti to Eilat about 28 May, escorted by Israeli warships.**
 - 3. The Israelis have two frigates in the gulf, and recently trucked two new MTB's overland to Eilat.**
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NSC BRIEFING

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5 May 1967

NEAR EAST NEWS

25X6

I.

II. In Syria, leftists won 3 of 4 by-elections, with variety of dirty work at polls.

A. Disappointed conservatives now trying to strengthen position in Army.

B. Leftists trying to muzzle critical press by reinstitution of martial law.

1. Bakhdash, Commie leader, insisting pipelines (including TAPline) must be blown in event of successful rightist coup. Sarraj--who blew IPC lines last time, agrees.

III. In Israel, plans to test Erez, Aqaba passage rights may mature soon.

A.

B. Israeli-flag Atlit, now rounding Africa, could make Aqaba test as soon as 19 May.

1. Reportedly will be escorted by Israeli naval units.

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